

February 17, 2023

The Honorable Gayle Conelly Manchin
Federal Co-Chair
Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Co-Chair Manchin,

I write today in support of Virginia Tech's (VT) grant application to the Appalachian Regional Commission's (ARC) Appalachian Regional Initiative for Stronger Economies (ARISE) program. If approved, VT will lead a multi-state collaborative designed to accelerate the native non-timber forest products (NTFP) sector of Central Appalachia.

The proposed work focuses on development of a five-year implementation plan to amplify Appalachian agroforestry production and value-added sales to large-scale national and international companies, expand regional cottage industries, and increase local and tourist consumers. Central Appalachia has some of the richest and most diverse forests in the country, capable of growing a valuable array of botanicals including ginseng, goldenseal, and black cohosh. The proposed work will mobilize essential resources to help increase raw material supply chains in the region, which are currently undervalued and underdeveloped.

If approved, this project will further ARC's goal to create a more diverse and resilient economy with an innovative approach to encourage regional collaborations, which will maximize impact. This project will set the roadmap for work critical to a well-established need for transformative economic development strategies, particularly in Central Appalachia, where communities continue to face significant socio-economic challenges.

I ask that you give this proposal every appropriate consideration. Should you or your staff have any questions, please contact Micah Barbour at 202-224-6291 or [Micah Barbour@warner.senate.gov](mailto:Micah_Barbour@warner.senate.gov).

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator